

"A GIRL OF TODAY" PROVES "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"

Porter Emerson Browne's
New Play Lacks Virility of
His Former Pieces and
Handicaps Ann Murdock
in First Starring Venture.

By JULIA CHANDLER MANZ.

Miss Ann Murdock made her first stellar bow to Washington at the Columbia Theater last night, when Charles Frohman presented her in the premiere performance of Porter Emerson Browne's new play, entitled "A Girl of Today," a comedy which might aptly be termed "much ado about nothing," if one may be allowed to borrow the phrase.

The first curtain finds us viewing the very pleasant and artistic living room of Gordon Blake, with its owner scrutinizing a newly arrived portrait of himself. Here we make the acquaintance of Blake's lawyer friend who prophesies much that is to follow in his earnest advice to Blake that he make a will in

his slinky lines to their full value and furnish what little there is of comedy, while William Holden and Miss Eleanor Gordon are the invading pair of relatives who make life miserable for Elaine. Frank Mills is seen as the guardian; Harry S. Hadfield as his attorney; William Eville as the butler, and Miss Pauline Duffield in an excellent performance as the housekeeper.

BELASCO.

William Dodge in "The Road to Happiness."

The proofreading of theater programs is notorious, probably because "there ain't no such animal," but the examples are seldom so amusing as that offered by the bill of the play at the Belasco Theater this week. Among the heraldings of "The Road to Happiness" furnished by the local press was the statement that Lord Northcliffe, the famous British publisher of periodicals, had called it an American "Bunny Pull."

This gives the clue to the program puzzle, which announces boldly that the play is by Lawrence Whitman, author of "An American," "Bunny Pull," "The Strings," and "Lord Northcliffe." Thus the new playwright, who is himself rumored to be no more than a name, is furnished by the ingenious printer with two mythical plays and a real triumph for the making of his reputation.

Well, Lord Northcliffe's comment, if he made it, deserved no better fate, for the resemblance between the cheerful American success and the Scotch idyl by Graham Moffatt, extending to the names of the comedies of village types and there the comparison ends. It would not be difficult to name several American rural plays that approach much nearer to the standard of "Bunny" in genuine merit and charm; let us say for example, George Ade's "Country Clubman" and James A. Herne's "Sag Harbor."

Mention of "Sag Harbor" suggests another thing that has been said about "The Road to Happiness," which is not so. Mr. William Dodge has been unkindly described as an apostle of naturalism in acting, and as carrying on the tradition of James A. Herne, whose character of Freeman Whitmarsh in "Sag Harbor" gave the younger man one of his early opportunities. Mr. Dodge's own acting seems realistic enough when you get used to him, but in the production of "The Road to Happiness" the banner of fidelity to nature which Mr. Herne's so nobly upheld is most decidedly not carried forward. Its standard of realism is scarcely even equal to that of "Way Down East," which it resembles in tone to a certain extent. Possibly a different view of the advantage of the play to the author's lines, which are for the most part prosy and merely explanatory aside from the drooleries of the principal characters.

This much of criticism appears to be due, to correct the wrong ideas which might be gathered from the pretentious one of the advance program. The quickest way to point to the true value of the piece is to add that a capacity audience which saw it last night cheered and clapped Mr. Dodge and the company and played with heartfelt delight and laughter over its whims without limit of restraint.

The dry vein of humor exhibited by Jim Whitman, the young law student and man of odd jobs portrayed by Mr. Dodge, is truly rich and luscious and brings out admirably the quaint flavor of the actor's personality. Jim Whitman holds the audience fascinated from the first, when he defies and "sasses" the harsh old village tyrant and wins his daughter to the last, when he softens the old man's heart and clears up the mysteries surrounding the arrival of a foundling.

Scott Cooper, as the harsh old Ben Hardcastle, is forcible and credible. Miss Marie Haines has a good character role as a strong-minded spinster. Some of the other parts are well done, but outstanding merit is hard to point out. In a very real sense a chicken on a beam aroused much friendly interest during some long conversation. A horse and a dog are other attractive features.

NATIONAL.

Cyril Maude in "Grumpy."

Cyril Maude, who made his initial appearance in Washington at the New National Theater last night, in the four-act play, "Grumpy," by Horace Hodge and T. Wigney Percival, is very much like Julius Caesar, for he came, was seen, and conquered. The magnificent audience surrendered without the least resistance, and at the close of the third act tendered the artist an ovation such as it is the fortune of few actors to elicit. The curtain rose and fell four times to give Mr. Maude the opportunity to bow his acknowledgements, but the applause did not cease until he came to the footlights in "star" carried off the honors, each one of the members of the company is entitled to unqualified commendation.

The play is of the higher order of melodrama. The action hinges on the robbery of a great diamond and its recovery through the shrewdness of Andrew Bullivant, an old criminal lawyer, who rejoices in the sobriquet of "Grumpy." Bullivant's nephew, Ernest Heron, has bought a famous diamond for a firm of jewelers and brings it to



GERTRUDE BONDHILL

Former members of Poll Stock Company returned this week.

his uncle's house. Jarvis, a professional crook, who has been employed by Isaac Wolfe, a "fence," to get possession of the gem, manages to be introduced into the new play, who is himself rumored to be no more than a name, is furnished by the ingenious printer with two mythical plays and a real triumph for the making of his reputation.

One might as well try to describe a perfect painting by mentioning this or that detail of the painter's work as to dissect Mr. Maude's superlatively fine characterization of the old criminal practitioner. The lovable nature of the old man concealed under querulous manners; his tenderness toward his granddaughter and nephew; his assumed severity to his valet by whom he is really dominated, finally, the cleverness with which he unmasks the villain and secures the restoration of the gem from Jarvis, make a mosaic of artistic presentation. The supporting members of the company are Miss Elsie Mackay as Virginia, Leslie Buswell as Ernest Heron, Alexander Onslow as Jarvis, Rowland Buckstone, who will be remembered as a member of the Ben Greet Players, and last to Wolfe, John Harwood as Ruddock, Grumpy's valet; C. Probyn-Dighton as Kebble, Jarvis' servant; Miss Maud Andrew as Susan, James Dale as Dr. MacLaren, and Miss Mabel Hicks as Mrs. MacLaren.

POLIS.

"The Rule of Three."

Advance announcements led us to believe that the reorganized Poll Players would exceed their predecessors in effectiveness, and the rollicking farce, "The Rule of Three," afforded everyone present the opportunity to display his or her degree of ability. Happily, these expectations were fully realized at the Avenue playhouse yesterday.

The farce was presented here only a few months ago at \$2 prices, and tells a smart, swift-moving tale of a lady and her third husband who stopped at a mountain hotel in the expectation of finding a quiet retreat for their honeymoon. The lady has divorced two husbands, and much to her astonishment finds both men registered at the mountain house. She is not disconcerted, however, on the contrary, with the best of feeling for all (which she evinces in various little soliloquies), she marries her third husband, and two off to mate on their own selection, meanwhile escaping from what threatened to become a serious complication in her desire to stick to husband number three when a flaw is discovered in her previous divorce.

The lines are clever, and the story is told in a lively tempo, with a happy abandon of spirits by the capital cast. Maude Gilbert gives an excellent performance of the fair divorcee. She has youth, beauty, and personality—plus ability, and will be remembered as the much-admired leading lady of the stock company at this house a couple of summers ago. When Miss Gilbert first appeared on the stage last night she was greeted with a storm of applause which lasted for many minutes. Fellows have all the qualities of the successful leading man. He seemed to enjoy himself as husband No. 3 last night, and gives promise of great popularity.

Clever prodigals who returned to the company last night are the vivacious, versatile, Gertrude Bondhill; Graham Velsey, and fat and funny Louis Haines, all of whom were greeted with enthusiasm last night.

Robert Lowe walked away with the acting honors last night as the preferred husband No. 3, and Helen Tracy's eccentric

Blackstone's
Bridal Shower
Bouquets
\$5 Up

Their remarkable beauty makes a lasting impression. Only the choicest flowers used.

14th & H Sts
N. W.
Phone M. 3707

J. E. Cunningham & Co.

316 Seventh Street

The Mammoth Cloak and Suit House

BEST VALUES IN THE CITY IN WINTER COATS

Values
Up to
\$20

\$5.00

Values
Up to
\$20

Just a few of these handsome coats are left. Only the fact that we must have the room for incoming spring stocks makes possible this absolute disregard of values. You will find the season's smartest fabrics and most wanted models well represented in the lot. But—Come early if you wish to take advantage of this offer.

Women's Suits Values Up to \$5.98

Odd sizes sacrificed to clear them out. Wonderful bargains at this price.

Children's Coats, Values Up to \$8.50

An extraordinary value. These coats are all lined and interlined. Materials—Boucles, corduroys, zibelines, and fancy mixtures. \$3.98

CASINO.

Vaudeville.

Before a capacity audience at yesterday's performance at the Casino Theater, Eddy Baldwin, presented "Uncle John," a tabloid sketch of New England life, that is among the best acts that have ever appeared at the Casino Theater. The action is replete with amusing situations and the cast went through the performance with a snap and ginger that was refreshing. Mr. Baldwin is a clever comedian and is also possessed of an ability to whistle marvelously. He was repeatedly encoined at every performance at the conclusion of his specialty. Miss Dot Leid headed the feminine contingent in a very acceptable manner. She was responsible for many of the catchiest musical numbers and helped out materially in many others. Walker and Ill kept the audience in an uproar with their funny situations. In "All Wrong," the sketch depicts the actions of a man who, staying out late, tries to get into the house without being discovered by his wife. Shortly after he gets into the house his wife returns from a club meeting and she, too, tries to get in without being observed by her husband. The situations that ensue kept the audience in laughter during the action of the sketch.

Edna Richardson contributed several pleasing songs. She has a good voice and much merriment. Her comedy work caught her auditors, who were lavish in their praise.

Last night, like every night this week, the country store night and the lucky patrons received a present that was worth while carrying home.

COSMOS.

Vaudeville.

The bill at the Cosmos Theater this week, is a pleasing program of music served up in as many different styles as the American stage is accustomed to. The principal attraction, "The Buyer from Pittsburgh," is a roaring farce on some of the present-day business methods employed by New York manufacturers. The action revolves around a woman whose husband, owning a large department store in the Pennsylvania city, dies and leaves the business to her. She comes to New York to buy and two manufacturers try to inveigle her into matrimony, only to find that she has married her head floorwalker, Miss Victoria Wallace, as the forelady of the ladies underwear establishment, was very good, as was Miss Almond Hallam, as the buyer from Pittsburgh. Miss Nellie Wallace, although not having a line during the entire action, was one of the features of the performance. She was the model, and with her physical attractions managed to show off to the best possible advantage several fetching gowns and articles of lingerie.

Running a close second for stellar honors was the Aubrey sisters, in a refined singing and dancing turn. They are both beautiful and the possessors of excellent voices. Their costumes were especially attractive. The Maybelle-Ponds Troupe of club jugglers were warmly received in a rapid-fire Indian club juggling act. Joe Spink and Ellen Tate presented

a charming singing and pianologue act. They were repeatedly sacored. The Circle Comedy Four, a male quartet, blended comedy and harmony in a pleasing turn, and Con Ruddy and Hilda Le Roy pleased with a neat singing and dancing skit. Their songs were of the snappy kind and their dancing showed several new steps. The performance opened with several reels of good photoplays and closed with the Hearst-Selig motion picture news.

MAKES HER DEBUT
AS DRAMATIC STAR

Special to The Washington Herald.
Richmond, Va., Feb. 8.—Annette Kellermann made her debut as a dramatic star at the Academy of Music here tonight in a brand-new musical comedy, "The Model Girl." The book and lyrics by Anne Caldwell, with music by Raymond Hubbell, L. C. Wierwell has surrounded his star with an excellent company, including Otis Harlan, Edith Decker, Gertrude Vanderbilt, John Park, Edwin Wilson, Hubert Wilke, and the most attractive chorus seen here in years.

The costumes are picturesque and scenic equipment massive. A large delegation of New York theatrical celebrities attended the premiere.

Other Theatres On Page Five.

FOR THE PAST FOUR MONTHS

(October—November—December—January)

The Washington Herald

GAINED

426,978

Lines of Paid Advertising

As Compared With the Same Four Months One Year Ago

THIS REMARKABLE ADVERTISING GROWTH IS ON THE BASIS OF

Over a Million and a Quarter Lines Gain Per Year

103,632 Lines Gained in October, 1914

131,401 Lines Gained in November, 1914

103,609 Lines Gained in December, 1914

88,336 Lines Gained in January, 1915

426,978 TOTAL Lines Gain

The Reason—The HERALD holds the attention of over half the Washington reading public for over half the time they have for newspaper reading. Coming as it does "The First Thing in the Morning" there is little chance of duplicating circulation in the same homes. Being sold to news carriers, news stands and newsboys on an absolutely nonreturnable basis insures permanency among the same readers, enabling the advertiser to derive an accumulative effect from his announcements as well as a full measure of returns the same day his advertisement appears.

CAPITAL \$1,000,000
EARNED SURPLUS .. \$1,000,000

**When You Open
An Account**

—at this bank you will become identified with the OLDEST savings depository in Washington—a bank that has been patronized by thousands of conservative depositors for nearly fifty years.

SAVING RATE of interest paid on both large and small accounts.

**National Savings and
Trust Company**
Corner 15th and N. Y. Ave.
FORTY-NINTH YEAR